

W201 The Individual and the State

How to tackle an essay TMA

You may already have a tried and trusted method based on earlier OU courses. Be ready to adapt it for W201. Please read pages 30 to 39 of the eTMA Guide (the pink pages in your Module Guide).

Your objective is to produce one continuous piece of prose divided into paragraphs. These will deal with each separate aspect of the question in a structured way and will bring everything together at the end in a section which will express a personal view.

This is easier said than done. This sheet is intended to give you a step by step **method** of achieving this which you can practise in your essay TMAs so that in your W201 exam you are confident when tackling an essay question.

You can choose whether or not to use headings in your answer. If in doubt try using headings as it encourages you to break each question down and tackle it systematically. Now read on...

1. Read the question. Do not be put off if you don't fully understand it.
2. Read the advice in italics about how to tackle the question. You **must** use the 'advice' as your guide to answering it. Prepare a list of headings you will use in your TMA. **The biggest single avoidable reason for poor marks in TMAs is the failure to follow the TMA advice in italics on how to structure your answer.**
3. Prepare a longer checklist **using your headings** of the points you are going to cover. Using headings in a TMA is a good way to give your answer shape and keep it relevant! For W201 it will be an asset if you can demonstrate to a tutor or an examiner that your answer has a relevant structure. Headings can help you achieve this.
4. Read the manual and text book(s).
Read the relevant sections using your checklist to ensure you have read round the important points. Make notes as you read if that helps.
5. Now make a written **outline plan** of your answer (less than a side of paper using your chosen **headings**).
6. Now prepare a **first draft** following your outline plan **using your chosen headings**. Count the number of words. Have a break. Have a break of at least 24 hours.
7. Reread the question and the advice afresh and then your answer. Make a note of anything that comes to mind that you have overlooked or wish to change. Change it.

8. Now read your draft again and ask:

- can I add any references to cases or authorities?
- can I refer to the historical development or context of any ideas or concepts?
- if I have referred to a legal concept have I defined it and explained what it means giving examples?
- am I asked to express a personal view and have I done so (if so have I set out the opposing arguments on each side)?

9. Redraft your TMA as a **final draft** and count the words. If you are over the limit edit your answer to comply with the word limit. Include a bibliography and a word count in your TMA.

Footnote

We all love using Google to look things up but what are the pitfalls if we use Google when answering a TMA?

- 1) Much material on the internet is American and not English which can lead you astray if you are looking for English law.
- 2) If you cut and paste from the internet you must attribute this in your bibliography every time or risk an investigation for plagiarism.
- 3) Searching on the internet eats up time.
- 4) You are going to be examined on the contents of the Manuals (and your text and case book) so time spent learning your way round these sources will pay dividends.